

Dhaka Day by Day

Quilts that Speak of the Past

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

Once upon a time one of the most popular forms of entertainment was story telling. After a hard day's work in the fields, at home or at the bazaar village people would sit and relax with their 'hookka' or betel leaf and listen to folk tales in the form of a poem or a song. These stories were often reproduced by women in their embroidered quilts known as 'nakshi kanthas'. Stylized village scenes woven in intricate patterns adorned these blankets made for the approaching winter, for the newly weds or the arrival of a new member of the family. With the increase in the cost of living of recent times and lack of time, one would think such a tradition has become a thing of the past. This is where organisations such as BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) have played a significant role in preserving this tradition and turning it into a profitable business. *Nakshi kanthas* now have a commercial value and are sold at relatively high prices in fancy boutiques and stores.

The *nakshi kantha* exhibition at Aarong being held from July 25th to August 7th is an effort by BRAC to promote this form of folk art. The *kanthas* are made of soft cotton cloth embroidered with threads in a whole range of colour, from subtle old rose pinks or pale beiges to flamboyant reds and oranges. Each *kantha* takes a whole month to make with about ten women working on it. The long hours of arduous labour, not to mention the skill required to make these blankets certainly justify the relatively high prices at which they are sold. A large sized *kantha* can be priced at over Taka 9,000.

The general motifs of these *kanthas* are simplistic and idealised. A single *kantha*, however, may have numerous motifs embroidered on it giving it a look of complexity. A small ship sailing, a bride in a 'palki' (wedding carriage), horses, cows, birds, and dancers can all be

sown in one blanket. The very irregularity of the patters and lack of proportion of the figures (a bird may be the same size as a horse) gives character to these works and makes them all the more interesting.

An added attraction of this exhibition is the third floor of Aarong (at Mirpur) where one can actually watch the women working on a *kantha*. Other exhibits also for sale include sarees, bags, sandals, lamp shades, jewellery boxes of various types with *nakshi kantha* design.

Along with *nakshi kanthas*, this exhibition displays a wide variety of silk tapestry work. The relationship between man and nature seems to be the predominant theme of these tapestries, a mother with her child under a leafy tree, women mashing rice grains, ladies with their betel paraphernalia, farmers working in golden rice fields, and long haired 'bautis' (mystics) singing amongst the greenery, are often portrayed. A little bit of history and mythology can also be seen in some of the more sophisticated tapestry works. One rather complicated piece shows a side view of a white palace with a Mogul king and queen watching a storm while a maid carries a 'hookka' in the lower part of the palace. Another one shows a Mogul princess feeding a deer while holding on to a musical instrument (*ak tara*). Yet another one has a blue Krishna with a radiant Radha sitting under a tree enjoying the tranquillity of the forest.

The *nakshi kanthas* and tapestry works are a recreation of long lost utopian land, of kings and queens, exotic birds and beasts, and simple village folk finding pleasure in glorious mother nature. A combination of the skills of the artisans themselves, and the support of the Jamalpur project initiated by BRAC has made an age-old tradition a means of earning a livelihood.



An embroidered quilt: Artistry in needle and thread.

Reopening of DU demanded

By Staff Correspondent

Samajtantrik Chhatra front has demanded immediate reopening of Dhaka University.

The organisation submitted a memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Maniruzzaman Miah on Saturday.

In another memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the front demanded immediate and effective steps to wipeout terrorism from the educational institutions.

In two separate rallies in front of the Vice-Chancellor's office and the Home Ministry, leaders of the organisation said it has been proved time and again that terrorism can not be eliminated by closing the universities.

They said the future of the students have become uncertain as more than fifty educational institutions of the country have been closed.

The student leaders also demanded arrest and trial of all terrorists including the killers of Dr Milton and Mahbub.

Anniversary of Jiboner Alo observed

The sixth founding anniversary of the Weekly Jiboner Alo was observed through holding a discussion at the BMDC auditorium in the city Saturday evening, reports BSS.

Editor of the weekly, Al-haj A.B.M. Nurul Islam presided over the function which was attended, among others, by Shahebjada, A. H. M. Shatullah, eldest son of Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Advocate Amrul Islam and Advocate Shawakat Ali Hawlader as the special guests.

Release of BCL leader demanded

A student strike was observed in Dhaka College Saturday at the call of Bangladesh Chhatra League demanding unconditional release of its leader Paul, reports UNB.

BCL (A-A) held a rally and brought out a procession during the campus shutdown in support of its demand. No classes were held. The BCL college unit President Syed Abdul Awal Shamim and General Secretary Golam Rabbani Chinu were present along with other central leaders in the rally.

The leaders condemned police action and demanded immediate release of Paul. The termed the case against Paul as 'false'.

TV Sunday

- 5.00 Opening announcement
- Al Quran
- Programme summary
- 5.15 Reading from the Bible
- 5.20 News in Bangla
- 5.30 Hashi Khushi (Children's programme)
- 5.55 Cartoon film: Abbot and Costello
- 6.20 Sports Programme
- 7.05 Tagore songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Probaha
- 9.00 Drama series: Oshin
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament roundup
- 10.40 Raag Rong (Classical Music)
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.45 Closing

'Particular quarter doesn't want parliamentary form'

Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razaque Ali has said a particular quarter was now engaged in creating anarchy to block re-emergence of parliamentary form of government in the country, reports UNB.

"This quarter doesn't want establishment of parliamentary form of government because they are afraid that the system would take away power from their clutches to the people," he said addressing a function of Sathkira Jana Samity at the BARC auditorium in the city Friday evening.

Only a section of politicians alone was not responsible for keeping up the past autocratic regime in power for long nine years, he said.

"A particular quarter, too, was not responsible to a great extent," he added in an oblique reference to the bureaucracy.

The Deputy Speaker called upon the "bureaucrats to change their outlook in keeping with the changed democratic atmosphere" and supplement government effort in giving democracy an institutional shape.

He said the BNP government doesn't believe in sectarian politics. But backward areas will get priority in development efforts of the government, Razaque said.

Presided over by Samity Chairman Habibur Rahman, the function was also addressed, among others, by Whip Md. Ashraf Hossain, Begum Farida Rahman, MP, and child specialist Prof. Mr Khan.

DU course system exams postponed

Dhaka University authorities have for the time being postponed the centrally controlled annual course system examinations due to the closure of the university, a university press release said Saturday, reports BSS.

The fresh dates will be announced in due time.

Weather

Moderate rain likely

By Staff Correspondent

Light to moderate rain or shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind with a few moderately heavy falls is likely to occur at most places over Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions during the next 24 hours commencing 6 pm on Saturday, reports Meteorological Department.

They day temperature till Monday may remain nearly unchanged over the country. On Saturday, the highest temperature recorded at Khepupara was 30.8 degree Celsius while the lowest temperature was 23 degrees recorded at Sylhet.

Meanwhile, Jessore experienced the highest downpour of 145 mm during the last 12 hours till 6 pm on Saturday. The rainfall in Dhaka city was recorded at 32 mm.

Kutubdia witnessed the second highest downpour of 91 mm. Sylhet had 58 mm, Feni 52 mm, Khulna 50 mm and Khepupara 12 mm during the same period.

Heavy rainfall warning: Heavy falls likely to occur at one or two places over Chittagong and Khulna divisions during the next 24 hours.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Little change. Extended outlook for another five days: Weather likely to improve.

The sun sets today (Sunday) at 6.41 pm and rises tomorrow (Monday) at 5.29 am.

The temperature and humidity in some cities and towns of the country on Saturday were:

Cities/towns	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	28.1	25.4	95	90
Rajshahi	30.5	24.5	93	86
Chittagong	29.8	24.4	93	89
Khulna	28.8	25	95	100
Feni	27	22.8	93	100
Kutubdia	26.2	23.5	95	NA
Jessore	28	24.6	NA	NA
Comilla	27.9	NA	NA	NA
Faridpur	27.4	23.8	91	93
Sylhet	27.6	23	97	93
Rangpur	30.2	25.9	88	88
Khepupara	30.8	24.5	91	95

Amateur Radio Union chief due tomorrow

Chairman of International Amateur Radio Union Region-3 Association David Rankin will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow (Monday) on a two-day visit, reports BSS.

Rankin will discuss with officials of T and T, NBA and Bangladesh Amateur Radio League the possibilities of setting up amateur radio service in Bangladesh, a press release of National Computers said Saturday.

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Feasibility of Jamuna project still under World Bank study

The economic feasibility of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge project is still under study of the World Bank, said WB Vice-President Attila Karaosmanoglu, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday, reports UNB.

Since co-financiers often differ on worthiness of projects, it is very important for the World Bank to come out with something on the Jamuna Bridge which it can definitely defend, he told newsmen during a short briefing on his arrival at the airport.

ERD Secretary Enam Ahmed Chowdhury and World Bank Resident Mission chief Christopher Willoughby received Karaosmanoglu.

Willoughby substantiated his

senior colleague's plea, saying "It's a project with enormous investment proposal of more than half a billion US dollar... detailed study is essential."

Asked if the World Bank rates the Jamuna Bridge as a priority project for Bangladesh, Karaosmanoglu said "that's the decision of the government, we only look into the economics of the project... whether it is economically viable or it fits to macro-economic framework of the country."

The Turkish-born World Bank executive came on a five-day official visit to discuss with key functionaries of the new government the economic progress of the country and for an appraisal of the Bank's lend-

ing operations in Bangladesh.

At present, there are 36 on-going projects in Bangladesh being financed by IDA, World Bank's soft-lending window.

The ERD Secretary said Bangladesh would take to the notice of the visiting World Bank official the political problems facing the new government in pursuing major economic reforms.

Financing of the Jamuna Bridge too will be raised with due importance, he said.

Release of withheld funds to the financial and the energy sectors will also be pursued.

During his stay in Dhaka, Karaosmanoglu will meet Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

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